

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for Senate Bill 408 – State Department of Education – Soccer Opportunities Program – Establishment

Dear Chair Feldman and Esteemed Committee Members,

At Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU), we believe that sports have the power to unite communities, build resilience, and open doors for youth who might otherwise be overlooked. Senate Bill 408, which establishes the Soccer Opportunities Program within the State Department of Education, is a step toward expanding access to this transformative experience for more students across Maryland.

For many Latino families, soccer is more than just a game—it is a vital connection to culture, community, and personal development. It fosters teamwork, discipline, and a sense of belonging. Yet, access to organized soccer programs remains limited for students in under-resourced communities. SB408 helps level the playing field by increasing opportunities for participation, ensuring that every child has a chance to benefit from the physical, social, and emotional advantages that come with sports.

We know that involvement in organized sports can be life-changing. It helps students develop leadership skills, stay engaged in school, and build healthy habits that last a lifetime. For immigrant and Latino youth, these programs provide a safe space to thrive, build friendships, and find mentors who can guide them both on and off the field. This is about more than athleticism—it's about giving all students the tools they need to succeed in life.

By supporting SB408, we invest in a future where every child can dream big and reach their full potential, regardless of their zip code or family income. Soccer has long been a source of inspiration and hope for many; this bill ensures that those doors of opportunity remain open to all Maryland students.

We respectfully urge the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB408. Together, we can create a more equitable and inclusive future through the power of sport.

Sincerely,
Carlos Orbe, Jr.
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist
Maryland Latinos Unidos
corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org